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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003893

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: PLOT THICKENS IN DEPUTY
GOVERNOR'S ELECTION DISQUALIFICATION

Classified By: PRT SALAH AD DIN TEAM LEADER RICK BELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (a) AND (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Questions surround the potential disqualification of Salah ad Din (SaD) Deputy Governor Abdullah Hussein Jebara from running as a candidate in the upcoming provincial elections. The Government of Iraq's (GOI) Commission on De-Ba'athification included Abdullah in its list of disqualified candidates. The next day, a well-connected contact told the PRT that although Abdullah had attempted to bribe the De-Ba'athification Commission to exempt him from disqualification, his request was refused by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). That same day, Abdullah gave the PRT Team Leader a copy of a "no-objection" letter purporting to be from Ahmed Chalabi the De-Ba'athification Commission; hours later, he phoned to say IHEC was not accepting that letter, but he thought the IHEC Chairman would accept it if it were brought to his personal attention. He asked that the U.S. Embassy or UNAMI verify that IHEC was acting properly. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) On December 3, the Embassy informed the PRT that the National De-Baathification Commission had found SaD Deputy Governor Abdullah Hussein Jebara ineligible for the Provincial Elections subject to the provisions of the de-ba'athification law. Abdullah had told the PRT on November 22 that he faced disqualification on grounds of his firqa-level membership in the dissolved Ba'ath Party, unless the IHEC received requests for a waiver on his behalf from Ambassador Crocker, GEN Odierno and/or the Prime Minister. (Note: there is no such procedure for a waiver in the election law, but a procedure for appealing such a ruling by the De-Baathification Commission is outlined in the de-ba'athification law. End note.)

14. (C) Several days later, Abdullah told the PRT Team Leader that he had resolved the problem. On December 4, Abdullah gave the Team Leader a photocopy of a letter purporting to be from Ahmed Chalabi, Chairman of The Supreme National Commission for De-Ba'athification, number 466 dated 2 December 2008; informal translation follows:

BEGIN TEXT:

To IHEC

Subject: Acceptance of exemption

With reference to the exemption presented by Messrs. Qahtan Hamada Faleh and Abdullah Hussein Jebara, and in keeping with our letters #13 of 19 Nov 2008 and #10 of 19 Nov 2008 there is no objection to their candidacy in the provincial council elections, please follow up and do the necessary.

With appreciation.

(signed)

For/ Dr. Ahmed Abdul-Hadi al-Chalabi
Chairman of the Supreme National Commission for
De-Ba'athification
Abdul-Aziz al-Randari

END TEXT.

(NOTE: The reference to Qahtan should read Qahtan Hamada Saleh (vice Faleh), SaD Governor Hamad Humood Shekti's Assistant for Technical Affairs. "Randari" is an uncertain reading; it could be Zaydawi or any of various combinations. END NOTE).

15. (C) Later that same day, Abdullah phoned the Team Leader to say IHEC was refusing to accept the above letter as sufficient to exempt him from disqualification. He said he thought IHEC Chairman Faraj al-Haydari would accept the letter if it were brought to his personal attention. He asked that the U.S. Embassy or UNAMI look into the matter to ensure that IHEC acted properly.

16. (C) Also on December 4, well-informed local contact Ra'id Khutab (strictly protect throughout) told the PRT that, within the past two days, Abdullah had offered a bribe of around \$200,000 U.S. to the De-Baathification Commission to find him eligible to run in the provincial elections, but that IHEC refused to let him run. According to Ra'id, Abdullah sought to make the bribe through a connection of his brother-in-law, Jowhar Al-Fahal, Chairman of the Provincial Investment Commission and head of the provincial de-baathification Committee. (NOTE: Ra'id is from the same tribe (Juboori) and hometown (Al-Alam) as Abdullah, and is

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now serving as campaign adviser for a rival political party. END NOTE).

17. (C) Ra'id told the PRT that Ahmed Abdullah, aka Abu Mazen, the Governor's Assistant for Security Affairs, had previously met with Ahmed Chalabi and offered approximately \$30-40,000 U.S. to prevent Abdullah from running. On October 16, Abu Mazen had told the PRT that his party would be vigilant to ensure that de-Baathification guidelines were strictly enforced. He specifically mentioned Deputy Governor Abdullah as a PC member who should not be allowed to run.

18. (C) Ra'id had previously informed the PRT that Abdullah had attempted to overcome the de-Ba'athification requirements by submitting a fraudulent letter of exemption purportedly signed by Ahmed Chalabi, Chairman of the National Reconciliation Commission, presumably the same one mentioned in para 4. Ra'id gave the PRT copies of two separate letters that he claimed showed evidence of this fraud. The first letter is dated 6/14/2005 and was sent from the Ministry of State for Governorates Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior. The letter states that Abdullah is subject to the provisions of the de-Baathification law--Ra'id claims the first letter is genuine. The second letter, purportedly from Chalabi, is dated 5/1/2008 and states that Abdullah is excluded from the law's requirements and is qualified to serve in SaD Provincial government office. According to Ra'id, this letter is fraudulent and was not issued by Chalabi. He encouraged the Embassy to verify the authenticity of the letter directly with Chalabi.

COMMENT

19. (C) PRT Team Leader believes that disqualifying someone who currently holds elective office on grounds of firqa-level membership in the former Ba'ath Party is potentially destabilizing, especially in SaD, which is home to so many former Ba'athists. It undercuts the political message that the democratic process is the way for all Iraqis to address

their needs and safeguard their interests.

¶10. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: Deputy Governor Abdullah Jebara held a relatively high-level (Firqa) position in the Ba'ath Party and served as a deputy division commander during the 2003 invasion, with rank of Brigadier General. His older brother was the top sheikh in Salah ad Din of the Juboori tribe, until assassinated last year. Abdullah has played arguably the most critical role in urging people in this overwhelmingly Sunni Arab province to work with the Americans instead of taking up arms. He has been working with CF since 2003, starting out as an interpreter and quickly moving into governance. He is generally seen as the most powerful person in the province today. He has excellent relations with CF and Embassy reps going back at least to the first PRT Team Leader in SaD. As we have reported, he is also the subject of numerous complaints about corruption, intimidation, even brutality. Abdullah is surrounded by family members and close associates who hold powerful and sensitive positions in the provincial government; his strength has made him a prime target in the escalation of political in-fighting prior to provincial elections. END COMMENT.

¶11. (C) EMBASSY COMMENT: IHEC informed us that they had concerns about possible violence in the area, following news of any official denial. MNF-I has been made aware of the situation and will monitor.

¶12. (C) EMBASSY COMMENT (CONT.): Iraqi Chief Justice Medhat has agreed to hear Jebara's appeal on December 14, the first day that the courts come out of recess. The Chief Justice Qday that the courts come out of recess. The Chief Justice advises that he will refer the appeal to the Court of Cassation, the body that is empowered to over-rule de'Ba'athification decisions, with instructions to make an immediate decision. The IHEC has further advised the Embassy that if Jebara's appeal is successful on December 14, the final day before ballots go to the printers, his name may be included on the ballot.
CROCKER